TITLE OF THE INVENTION

INFORMATION PROVIDING SUPPORT SYSTEM AND METHOD, AND
PROGRAM AND SERVER FOR USE IN THE SYSTEM AND METHOD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

5   This is a Continuation Application of PCT
Application No. PCT/JP02/03394, filed April 4, 2002,
which was not published under PCT Article 21(2) in
English.

This application is based upon and claims the
10   benefit of priority from the prior Japanese Patent
Application No. 2001-110400, filed April 9, 2001,
the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by
reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

15   1.   Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a system using
a network, particularly to an information providing
support system and method in which a client can easily
provide information and a user can easily enjoy the
20   information via electronic mail, and to a program and
server for use in the system and method.

2.   Description of the Related Art

Advertising activities and various information
services by various companies have heretofore been
25   carried out, for example, by advertising posters hung
in trains, advertisements on wrapping buses, business
cards, advertisements in newspapers and magazines, and

articles.

Therefore, when the user records or stores desired information described in these advertisements, it has been necessary to manually take notes or to use special apparatuses such as a copy machine, scanner, and digital camera.

Therefore, for example, even when the user sees interesting advertisements by chance outdoors, and unless the user carries memo pads or various apparatuses described above, it has been impossible to instantly record/store/edit the information described in the advertisements.

Moreover, in recent years, uniform resource locators (URL) of own web pages of the companies have been placed in various advertisements as described above in many cases.

In this case, the user uses a personal computer to access the web page of the company in which the user takes an interest via the Internet, and can accordingly obtain desired information placed in the advertisements or associated information.

However, from a standpoint of the client company, in order to open the own web page on the Internet, hypertext by hypertext markup language (HTML) and required images need to be stored on web servers such as an internet presence provider (IPP) by a file transfer protocol (FTP) tool, processing is

complicated, there have also been many cases requiring contracts with the IPP beforehand, and this has been intricate.

Moreover, from a user's standpoint, on accessing the web page of the company in which the user takes an interest, only an HTML source is obtained. In a user's terminal, the received HTML source is analyzed with a browser and only displayed in a predetermined manner. Therefore, it has not been easy to store/edit/arrange obtained information.

On the other hand, in recent years, a cellular phone or a portable information terminal has generally been used to access the web page of the Internet in a place where the user has gone and to obtain the information. However, there have been restrictions on the information (web page) obtained in this case, and it has not been easy to store, edit, or arrange the obtained information as described above. Furthermore, since the capacity of the built-in memory is limited in the cellular phone, there has also been a limit to the amount of information capable of being stored. On the other hand, in order to provide the information to the user which is an object, it is also necessary for the client company to prepare the web page for exclusive use in the cellular phone, a burden is also large, and this has been intricate.

Here, taking notice of user's operability,

a technique has also heretofore been developed for
automatically converting a predetermined code into
a URL, when the code is input instead of the URL in
accessing the web page. However, in this technique,
the user needs to install predetermined software in
the own personal computer for use or to access a unique
web page before accessing the desired web page, and
eventually intricate operations have been involved.

As described above, the user hopes to obtain the
desired information quickly with a simple operation in
a form suitable for storing/editing/arranging the
information, but there has not been any technique to
realize this.

It is to be noted that, for example, in Jpn. Pat.
Appln. KOKAI Publication No. 2000-57066, a technique is
disclosed for automatically deciphering a received
question content and extracting corresponding data
from a database to automatically return the data via
electronic mail, when questions and answers concerning
provided information content by product catalogs are
returned via electronic mail.

However, in the publication, it is described that
when the question content is assumed beforehand, the
corresponding data can be returned via the electronic
mail, but there is not any "concrete description"
concerning a method for deciphering the received
question content. The technique is intricate, because

it is necessary to send the question content in
sentences.

The present invention has been developed in
consideration of the above-described problems, and an

5   object thereof is to provide the following convenience
to a user and client, support an information providing
service between the user and client, and simplify and
smooth the service in an information providing support
system and method in which a client terminal apparatus,

10   user terminal apparatus, and server are connected to
one another via a network for communication and in
a program and server for use in the system and method.

That is, as a detailed object, a user only
performs a simple operation with a user terminal

15   apparatus (apparatus having a function of being capable
of transmitting/receiving electronic mails) so that
desired information on advertisements can quickly be
obtained via the electronic mail in a form suitable
for storing, editing, or arranging the information.

20   A further object is that reception conditions of
the electronic mail can appropriately be set, and
accordingly, for example, the information on the
advertisements can be received in two or more desired
addresses.

25   Moreover, an object is for a client to only
perform a simple operation with a client terminal
apparatus so that desired advertisement information and

attached files can quickly be registered as an object

capable of being supplied to a user at any time for

24 hours. As a further object, mail addresses of users

who have predetermined tastes can be collected, and

5   direct mails can automatically be transmitted to the

user.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to a first aspect of the present

invention, there is provided a server which can

10   freely communicate with a client terminal apparatus and

a user terminal apparatus via a network, comprising:

a communication section which communicates with the

client terminal apparatus and user terminal apparatus;

a control section which executes control so as to

15   attach a predetermined code including a character

string to predetermined information in a stage in which

the predetermined information is accepted, when the

communication section receives the predetermined

information transmitted from the client terminal

20   apparatus; and a storage section which associates and

stores at least the predetermined code with the

predetermined information and further a user ID with

an address and a reception condition concerning the

address, wherein the control section executes the

25   control so as to extract the predetermined code

included in an electronic mail as information

corresponding to a title of the electronic mail, read

the predetermined information corresponding to the
predetermined code from the storage section, and return
the predetermined information to the address from the
communication section via the electronic mail, when the
communication section receives the electronic mail
transmitted from the user terminal apparatus.

According to a second aspect of the present
invention, there is provided a server which can
freely communicate with a client terminal apparatus and
a user terminal apparatus via a network, comprising:
a communication section which communicates with the
client terminal apparatus and user terminal apparatus;
a control section which executes control so as to
attach a predetermined code including a character
string to predetermined information in a stage in which
the predetermined information is accepted, when the
communication section receives the predetermined
information transmitted from the client terminal
apparatus; and a storage section which associates
and stores at least the predetermined code with the
predetermined information and further a user ID with
a plurality of addresses and reception conditions
concerning the respective addresses, wherein the
reception conditions include setting information on
a file format for each of the plurality of addresses,
disapproval/approval of an attached file, a maximum
value of the number of characters, a maximum value of

an attached file size, and acceptance/rejection of
a direct mail, and the control section executes
the control so as to extract the predetermined code
included in an electronic mail as information
corresponding to a title of the electronic mail, read
the predetermined information corresponding to the
predetermined code from the storage section, and return
the predetermined information to the address from the
communication section via the electronic mail, when
the communication section receives the electronic mail
transmitted from the user terminal apparatus.

According to a third aspect of the present
invention, there is provided a server which can
freely communicate with a client terminal apparatus and
a user terminal apparatus via a network, comprising:
a communication section which communicates with the
client terminal apparatus and user terminal apparatus;
a control section which executes control so as to
attach a predetermined code including a character
string to predetermined information in a stage in which
the predetermined information is accepted, when the
communication section receives the predetermined
information transmitted from the client terminal
apparatus; and a storage section which associates
and stores at least the predetermined code with the
predetermined information, further the predetermined
code with the predetermined information and a category

of the predetermined information, and further a user ID
with a demander address and the predetermined code,
wherein the control section executes the control so
as to extract the predetermined code included in
5   an electronic mail as information corresponding to
a title of the electronic mail, read the predetermined
information corresponding to the predetermined code
from the storage section, and return the predetermined
information to the user terminal apparatus from the
10   communication section via the electronic mail, when the
communication section receives the electronic mail
transmitted from the user terminal apparatus, and so as
to acquire the predetermined code corresponding to the
category from the storage section, further acquire the
15   user ID and demander address corresponding to the
predetermined code from the storage section, and
transmit a direct mail to the demander address.

According to a fourth aspect of the present
invention, there is provided a server which can
20   freely communicate with a client terminal apparatus and
a user terminal apparatus via a network, comprising:
a communication section which communicates with the
client terminal apparatus and user terminal apparatus;
a control section which executes control so as
25   to attach a predetermined code including a character
string to predetermined information in a stage in which
the predetermined information is accepted, when the

communication section receives the predetermined

information transmitted from the client terminal

apparatus; and a storage section which associates and

stores the predetermined code with a plurality of

5   pieces of the predetermined information, wherein the

control section executes the control so as to extract

the predetermined code included in an electronic

mail as information corresponding to a title of the

electronic mail, read the predetermined information

10   corresponding to the predetermined code from the

storage section under a predetermined rule concerning

random, date designation, and time designation, and

return the predetermined information to the user

terminal apparatus from the communication section via

15   the electronic mail, when the communication section

receives the electronic mail transmitted from the user

terminal apparatus.

According to a fifth aspect of the present

invention, there is provided an information providing

20   support method by a server which can freely communicate

with a client terminal apparatus and a user terminal

apparatus via a network and which comprises a communi-

cation section, a control section, and a storage

section, the method comprising: executing control by

25   the control section so as to attach a predetermined

code including a character string to predetermined

information in a stage in which the predetermined

information is accepted, when the communication section receives the predetermined information transmitted from the client terminal apparatus; associating and storing the predetermined code with the predetermined information and further a user ID with an address and reception conditions concerning the address by the storage section; extracting the predetermined code included in an electronic mail as information corresponding to a title of the electronic mail by the control section, when the communication section receives the electronic mail transmitted from the user terminal apparatus; and executing the control by the control section so as to read the predetermined information corresponding to the predetermined information to the address via the electronic mail by the communication section.

According to a sixth aspect of the present invention, there is provided an information providing support method by a server which can freely communicate with a client terminal apparatus and a user terminal apparatus via a network and which comprises a communication section, a control section, and a storage section, the method comprising: executing control by the control section so as to attach a predetermined code including a character string to predetermined information in a stage in which the predetermined

information is accepted, when the communication section receives the predetermined information transmitted from the client terminal apparatus, and associating and storing the predetermined code with a plurality of pieces of the predetermined information by the storage section; and executing the control by the control section so as to extract the predetermined code included in an electronic mail as information corresponding to a title of the electronic mail, read the predetermined information corresponding to the predetermined code from the storage section under a predetermined rule concerning random, date designation, and time designation, and return the predetermined information to the user terminal apparatus from the communication section via the electronic mail, when the communication section receives the electronic mail transmitted from the user terminal apparatus.

According to a seventh aspect of the present invention, there is provided a program for use in a server which can freely communicate with a client terminal apparatus and a user terminal apparatus and which comprises a storage section, the program allowing the server to execute a process comprising: a step of attaching a predetermined code including a character string to predetermined information in a stage in which the predetermined information from the client terminal apparatus is accepted; a step of associating and

storing the predetermined code with the predetermined
information and further with a user ID, an address,
and reception conditions concerning the address by
the storage section; and a step of extracting the
5   predetermined code included in an electronic mail as
information corresponding to a title of the electronic
mail from the user terminal apparatus, reading the
predetermined information corresponding to the
predetermined code from the storage section, and
10   returning the predetermined information to the address
via the electronic mail.

     According to an eighth aspect of the present
invention, there is provided a program for use in
a server which can freely communicate with a client
15   terminal apparatus and a user terminal apparatus and
which comprises a storage section, the program allowing
the server to execute a process comprising: a step
of executing control so as to attach a predetermined
code including a character string to predetermined
20   information in a stage in which the predetermined
information is accepted, when the predetermined
information transmitted from the client terminal
apparatus is received, and associating and storing the
predetermined code with a plurality of pieces of the
25   predetermined information in the storage section; and
a step of executing the control so as to extract the
predetermined code included in an electronic mail as

information corresponding to a title of the electronic

mail, read the predetermined information corresponding

to the predetermined code from the storage section

under a predetermined rule concerning random, date

5   designation, and time designation, and return the

predetermined information to the user terminal

apparatus from the communication section via the

electronic mail, when the electronic mail transmitted

from the user terminal apparatus is received.

10   BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a schematic constitution diagram of

an information providing support system according to

one embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram showing a detailed

15   constitution example of a client terminal apparatus 2,

and user terminal apparatuses 3, 4 in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a block diagram showing a detailed

constitution example of a server 1 in FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a flowchart showing a flow of a process

20   for issuing s-memo code numbers;

FIG. 5 is a diagram showing one example of

a client authentication page;

FIG. 6 is a diagram showing one example of a text

registration page;

25   FIG. 7 is a diagram showing one example of an

s-memo table;

FIG. 8 is a diagram showing one example of an

s-memo code notice page;

FIG. 9 is a flowchart showing the flow of a process concerning personal reception condition customization;

FIG. 10 is a diagram showing one example of a user authentication page;

FIG. 11 is a diagram showing one example of a personal reception condition customized page;

FIG. 12 is a diagram showing one example of a user table;

FIG. 13 is a flowchart showing the flow of the process of one example by a server which has received an electronic mail concerning a demand for information by a user;

FIG. 14 is a diagram showing one example of a demand log table; and

FIG. 15 is a flowchart showing the flow of a process for limiting a user who has specific tastes from recording of a demand action.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

An embodiment of the present invention will be described hereinafter with reference to the drawings.

First, a constitution of an information providing support system according to one embodiment of the present invention will be described in detail with reference to FIGS. 1 to 3.

As shown in FIG. 1, the information providing

support system is constituted of a server 1 connected to a client terminal apparatus 2 and user terminal apparatuses 3, 4 via a network 5 so that communication is possible. The client terminal apparatus 2 such as a personal computer is assumed. In addition to the personal computer, the user terminal apparatuses 3, 4 such as a cellular phone and a personal digital assistant (PDA) are assumed.

Moreover, the network 5 such as internet is assumed, but is not limited to this, and, needless to say, LAN, WAN, and the like are included.

It is to be noted that in FIG. 1, to simplify the description, only one client terminal apparatus 2 and two user terminal apparatuses 3, 4 are shown, but, needless to say, a plurality of client terminal apparatuses and user terminal apparatuses are connected.

The client terminal apparatus 2 and user terminal apparatuses 3, 4 include an inner constitution shown, for example, in FIG. 2. That is, a control section 10 for executing a whole control is connected to a transmission control section 11 such as a modem, a display section 12 such as a CRT display and liquid crystal display, an operation section 13 such as a mouse and keyboard, and a storage section 14 such as a memory. In the storage section, general browser software, mailer software, and the like are stored.

On the other hand, the server 1 includes an inner constitution shown, for example, in FIG. 3. That is, a control section 20 for executing the whole control is connected to/constituted of a transmission control section 21 such as a modem and router, a storage section 22 such as the memory, and a database including an s-memo table 23, a user table 24, and a demand log table 25.

Here, an s-memo code is an identification code automatically given to the information at a time when the client supplies the information such as the advertisement to the server.

Moreover, the s-memo table 23 refers to a predetermined table for searching and extracting the information corresponding to the s-memo code. The constitutions of the s-memo table 23, user table 24, and demand log table 25 are shown in FIGS. 7, 12, 14, and the details will be described later.

It is to be noted that a client communication section and user communication section described in claims correspond, for example, to the transmission control section 11, and the server communication section corresponds, for example, to the transmission control section 21. A control section described in the claims corresponds, for example, to the control section 20, and a storage section corresponds, for example, to the database. Predetermined information refers

to information provided by the client to receive

an information providing support service, that is,

information acquired by the user by the service, and

a predetermined code refers to the s-memo code.

5   A function of the information providing support

system constituted in this manner will be described

hereinafter.

It is to be noted that here those who supply the

information so as to receive the information providing

10   support service are referred to as the "clients", and

those who use the information are referred to as the

"users".

First, a procedure for issuing an s-memo code

number with respect to the information supplied from

15   the client by the server 1 will be described in detail

with reference to FIGS. 4 to 8.

When the client accesses the web page of

"s-memo.com (this is a tentative domain name attached

for the convenience of the description)" by the client

20   terminal apparatus 2 (step S1), the server 1 transmits

an HTML source of a client authentication page to the

transmission control section 11 of the client terminal

apparatus 2 via the transmission control section 21 and

network 5 (step S2).

25   In the client terminal apparatus 2, the HTML

source received by the transmission control section 11

is analyzed by the control section 10 to display the

client authentication page in the display section 12

(step S3). This client authentication page is as shown

in FIG. 5, and suggests input of client's ID and

password (PW).

Here, when the client operates the operation

section 13 to input the self ID and PW, the information

is sent to the transmission control section 21 of the

server 1 via the transmission control section 11 and

network 5. Then, in the server 1, the control section

20 judges whether or not the client is registered (step

S4). When the client is unregistered, predetermined

client registration is carried out (step S5).

Next, the server 1 transmits the HTML source of

a text registration page to the transmission control

section 11 of the client terminal apparatus 2 via the

transmission control section 21 and network 5 (step

S6). Then, in the client terminal apparatus 2, the

HTML source received by the transmission control

section 11 is analyzed by the control section 10 to

display the text registration page in the display

section 12 (step S7).

The text registration page is as shown in FIG. 6.

In the client terminal apparatus 2, the following

information is inputted into the display.

That is, the client writes a desired document such

as the advertisement in a "text" region of the text

registration page. In this case, a category of a

content of the advertisement is selected from choices of a "category" region. In this example, "education" is selected.

When an attached file (image, music, program, and the like) is desired to be added, a "reference" button is clicked. Then, a dialog box of "file list" opens. Subsequently, a file desired to be attached is selected from a file group of a "file list" region, and a "select" button is clicked. Then, a selected file name ("C:\tmp\01.gif" in this example) is displayed on the left of a screen of the "reference" button. When an "upload" button is clicked in this state, the file is uploaded, and displayed in an "attached file" region. When the attached file is to be deleted, the file desired to be deleted is selected from the file group displayed in the "attached file" region, and a "delete" button may be clicked.

The above-described input information is sent to a server 1 side, and on the server 1 side, the control section 20 adds these records to the s-memo table 23 (step S8).

The s-memo table 23 includes a constitution as shown in FIG. 7.

That is, in this example, the client's ID is associated with the s-memo code, content of the text, category, format of the file, and the like, and stored.

For example, the information inputted by the

client in the step S7 is stored as client ID "aaaaa",
s-memo code "10128", text "new first-grade reference
book ○○ phone No. ×××", category "education", and
file format "TEXT" in a fourth row from above in the
table 23.

Here, the s-memo code is automatically attached in
a stage where the control section 20 of the server 1
accepts the text registration from the client terminal
apparatus 2. This respect is one of characteristics of
the present information providing support system.

Subsequently, the server 1 transmits the HTML
source of the s-memo code notice page to the
transmission control section 11 of the client terminal
apparatus 2 via the transmission control section 21 and
network 5 (step S9). Then, in the client terminal
apparatus 2, the control section 10 analyzes the HTML
source received by the transmission control section 11
to display the s-memo code notice page in the display
section 12 (step S10).

This s-memo code notice page is as shown in
FIG. 8.

That is, in the s-memo code notice page, the
"text", "category", "attached file list", "file format"
registered in the s-memo table 23, and the automati-
cally attached "s-memo code" are displayed.

Therefore, the client can see this page to confirm
that the desired information such as the advertisement

is exactly registered on the server 1 side and that a state capable of receiving the information providing support service is obtained. That is, thereafter, the s-memo code is printed/included in the self

5   advertisements, and can accordingly be used by the user.

It is to be noted that the content of the s-memo code notice page is transmitted to a client terminal apparatus 2 side from the server 1 even via the

10   electronic mail (step S11). This facilitates the storing/arranging of the information on the client side.

As described above, a series of processes for automatically issuing the s-memo code number with

15   respect to the information provided by the client end.

It is to be noted that in the above-described example, a sequence of numbers of five digits has been used as the s-memo code, but needless to say the present invention is not limited to this. For example,

20   when the registered text has a TEXT format, XXXXX (X = 0, 1, 2 ...) can be used. With an HTML format, h-XXXXX can be used. When the registered text includes the attached file, a-XXXXX can also be used.

In this case, when seeing an initial letter of

25   the s-memo code, the user demanding the information can know the format of the file to be obtained in advance. It is to be noted that even in this case, although

details are described later, needless to say, the initial letter can be omitted in demanding the information.

Next, a series of processes concerning personal reception condition customization by the user will be described in detail with reference to FIGS. 9 to 12. It is to be noted that in the present embodiment, the information can be acquired without any user registration. Therefore, the process of the personal reception condition customization is an arbitrary procedure performed only by a user who desires to perform the process.

When the user accesses a homepage of "s-memo.com" by the user terminal apparatus 3 (step S21), the server 1 transmits the HTML source of a user authentication page to the transmission control section 11 of the user terminal apparatus 3 via the transmission control section 21 and network 5 (step S22). Then, in the user terminal apparatus 3, the control section 10 analyzes the HTML source received by the transmission control section 11 to display the user authentication page in the display section 12 (step S23).

This user authentication page is, for example, as shown in FIG. 10, and suggests at least the input of the user's ID and PW.

Here, when the user operates the operation section 13 to input the self identifier (ID) and password (PW),

the information is sent to the transmission control

section 21 of the server 1 via the transmission control

section 11 and network 5. Then, in the server 1,

the control section 20 judges whether or not the user

5   has been registered (step S24). When the user is

unregistered, predetermined user registration is

carried out (step S25).

Next, the server 1 transmits the HTML source of

a personal reception condition customized page to the

10   transmission control section 11 of the user terminal

apparatus 3 via the transmission control section 21

and network 5 (step S26). Then, in the user terminal

apparatus 3, the HTML source received by the

transmission control section 11 is analyzed by the

15   control section 10 to display the personal reception

condition customized page in the display section 12

(step S27).

The personal reception condition customized page

is as shown in FIG. 11.

20   That is, in the personal reception condition

customized page, as receivers, an address 1 (basic

address), address 2 (another address), and address 3

(another address) can be registered. Furthermore, for

each of the addresses 1, 2, 3, file formats (TEXT,

25   HTML), disapproval/approval of the attached file,

the maximum value of the number of characters (MAX),

the maximum value of the attached file size (MAX), and

acceptance/rejection of a direct mail (hereinafter
abbreviated as DM) can be set.

For example, in FIG. 11, in ddddd's reception
condition setting page, "d1@xxx.ne.jp" is set as the
address 1, the file format is TEXT, the attached file
is disapproved, MAX of the number of characters is 250
characters, and DM is set to be rejected. Furthermore,
"d2@xxx.co.jp" is set as the address 2, the file format
is TEXT, HTML, the attached file is approved, MAX of
the attached file size is 1000 kilobytes, and DM is set
to be accepted. Moreover, "d3@xxx.ne.jp" is set as the
address 3, the attached file is disapproved, and DM is
set to be accepted.

It is to be noted that in the setting of the
address 1, the attached file size MAX is not set. This
is because the attached file is set to be disapproved,
and the setting is not necessary.

The above-described input information is sent to
the server 1 side, and on the server 1 side, the
control section 20 adds these records to the user table
24 (step S28).

The constitution of the user table 24 is as shown
in FIG. 12.

That is, in the user table 24, the user IDs
are associated with the addresses 1 to 3 and the
reception conditions concerning the respective
addresses (set information concerning the file format,

disapproval/approval of the attached file, MAX of

the number of characters, attached file size MAX,

and acceptance/rejection of DM) and stored.   The

information set beforehand in the reception condition

5   setting page of FIG. 11 is stored as a user ID "ddddd",

the addresses 1, 2, 3, and the respective reception

conditions in a first row of the user table 24.

In this manner, the server 1 transmits the

information registered in the user table 24 to the

10   transmission control section 11 of the client terminal

apparatus 2 via the transmission control section 21 and

network 5 (step S29).   As described above, a series of

processes concerning the personal reception condition

customization by the user ends.

15   Next, one example of the process related to the

information providing support by the server 1 which has

received the electronic mail related to the information

demand by the user will be described with reference to

FIGS. 7, 12 to 14.

20   For example, the user has an interest in the

information by a certain client via an advertising

poster hung in a train, advertisement of a wrapping

bus, business card, advertisement on the newspaper

and magazine, and articles.   In this case, the user

25   transmits the electronic mail in which the s-memo code

printed on the advertisement is described in a column

of "title" to the server 1, and then enters this

process.

In this respect, the user may only grasp (register) only the mail address of the server 1 to which the s-memo code is to be sent, and this is very convenient.

In the server 1, on receiving the electronic mail from the user terminal apparatus 3 by the transmission control section 21 (step S31), the control section 20 starts a mail analysis program stored beforehand in the storage section 22 (step S32), and extracts the following items from the received electronic mail (step S33).

That is, in general, the electronic mail is constituted of a header portion and body (mail content), the header portion has the information for exactly sending the electronic mail, but here the following is extracted from the information of the header portion.

    From   : (user's address) ... (a)

    Subject : (s-memo code)   ... (b)

Subsequently, the control section 20 of the server 1 reads the text (this is assumed as (c)) corresponding to an s-memo code (b) from the s-memo table 23 (see FIG. 7) (step S34). Subsequently, the control section 20 of the server 1 refers to the user table 24 (see FIG. 12) (step S35), and judges whether or not an address (a) exists in the addresses 1 to 3 (step S36).

Here, when the address (a) exists in the addresses
1 to 3, a record is added to the demand log table of
FIG. 14 (step S37).

That is, for example, when the address of
a transmitter of the electronic mail is (a) =
"d1@xxx.ne.jp" and the title is (b) = 10128, these
exist in the user table 24 (FIG. 12), and therefore
the user ID "ddddd", demander address "d1@xxx.ne.jp",
and s-memo code "10128" are added to the demand log
table 25.

It is to be noted that the record in the fourth
row from above in FIG. 14 corresponds to this.

Moreover, the control section 20 of the server 1
reads the user's address (this is assumed as (d)) from
the user table 24 (step S38), and returns texts (c) to
demander's return desired address (d) (step S39).

In this example, when the texts (c) to be returned
to the user ddddd is only a text file, the texts are
returned to the addresses 1, 2. An HTML file or an
attached file if any is returned to the address 2.

On the other hand, in the step S36, when the
above-described (a) does not exist in the addresses 1
to 3, the record is added to the demand log table of
FIG. 14. In this case, the demander's address (a) is
stored as a user ID "none" together with the s-memo
code (b) (step S40).

The record in a third row from above in FIG. 14

corresponds to this. Moreover, the texts (c) are returned to the demander's address (a) (step S41).

It is to be noted that when binary information of the data such as the image, sound, and program is attached to the texts (c), an extension function of the electronic mail referred to as multipurpose internet mail extensions (MIME) is used.

In this manner, after the process of the step S39, an electronic mail indicating that the electronic mail including the attached file has been sent to a returnable address, that is, in which "return situation report" is described is transmitted to at least one of the user's addresses (a), (d) (step S42).

As described above, one example of the process related to the information providing support service by the server 1 which has received the electronic mail related to the information demand by the user ends.

Next, a flow of a process for limiting users having specific tastes from the record of a demand action will be described in detail with reference to FIGS. 7, 12, 15.

Here, "education" will be illustrated as an example of the "specific tastes", and a process to limit the specific user will be described. First, the control section 20 of the server 1 acquires the s-memo code whose category is "education" from the s-memo table 23 (FIG. 7) (step S50). That is, in this

example, the control section 20 refers to the s-memo
table 23 of FIG. 7, detects the code whose "category"
is "education", and obtains "10128" as the
corresponding s-memo code.

5   Subsequently, the control section 20 of the server
1 refers to the demand log table 25 (FIG. 14) to
specify the user who has demanded the s-memo code
"10128" (step S51). In this example, objects are
limited to users ddddd, eeeee.

10   Next, the control section 20 refers to the user
table 24 (FIG. 12) to judge whether or not the
corresponding users ddddd, eeeee accepts the DM from
the company (step S52). That is, in this example,
ddddd can also specify the address of a destination

15   with "YES", and eeeee indicates "YES", but the address
cannot be specified.

As described above, the control section 20
specifies ddddd as the corresponding user from the user
table 24 to acquire the address 2 (step S53). In this

20   manner, the process for limiting the user having the
specific taste from the record of the demand action
ends.

Since the client can obtain the address of the
specific user limited by the server 1, various types

25   of direct mail can be transmitted. It is to be noted
that the transmission of the direct mail itself can be
entrusted to the server 1.

The embodiment of the present invention has been described above, but the present invention is not limited to this, and can variously be modified/changed without departing from the scope.

For example, in the above-described embodiment, the character string has been described as the example of the s-memo code, and the information on an electronic mail return destination address can also be included in the s-memo code. That is, with "10128:2", the electronic mail is returned to the address 2. With "10128:1, 2", the electronic mail can be controlled to be returned to the addresses 1, 2.

Furthermore, it is supposed that a lottery number, discount ticket, and the like are included in the text of the electronic mail, when the server 1 returns the electronic mail corresponding to the s-memo code demanded by the user.

In this case, for example, a user who has seen the advertisement concerning a restaurant transmits the electronic mail whose s-memo code is described in the title to the server 1. Then, when the server 1 returns the information on the advertisement via the electronic mail, the "discount ticket" in the restaurant is automatically added into the text.

Moreover, one s-memo code is associated with a plurality of texts and registered, and a function of automatically returning the electronic mail

under predetermined rules such as "random", "date

designation", and "designated time designation" with

respect to the demand from the user can also be added.

In this case, for example, the electronic mail in

5 which the s-memo code concerning the advertisement of

a certain movie theater is described in the "title" is

sent. Then, the server 1 returns the electronic mail

concerning a movie schedule of "date" on which the

electronic mail is received.

10 Furthermore, as a function with respect to a

member (registered) user, for example, a function of

returning a plurality of latest impressions of those

who have used the restaurant via the electronic mail

can also be realized, when the s-memo code concerning

15 the certain restaurant is sent to the server 1 via the

electronic mail. In this case, the server 1 stores a

plurality of electronic mails beforehand in association

with the s-memo code of the restaurant.

Moreover, when two or more s-memo codes are

20 attached to the column of the "title" of the electronic

mail, it is also possible to obtain the information on

a plurality of clients with one operation.

As described above in detail, according to the

present invention, there can be provided an information

25 providing support system and method, and a program and

server for use in the system and method, in which the

following conveniences are given to a user and client

to support, simplify, and smooth information providing services between the user and client.

That is, in detail, when the user simply operates a user terminal apparatus, desired information on advertisements can quickly be obtained via an electronic mail in a format suitable for storing/ editing/arranging the information. Furthermore, when reception conditions of the electronic mail can appropriately be set, for example, the information on the advertisements can be received in two or more desired addresses.

Moreover, when the client only carries out a simple operation with a client terminal apparatus, desired advertisement information and attached file can quickly be registered as an object capable of being supplied to the user at any time for 24 hours. Furthermore, mail addresses of users who have specific tastes can be collected, and a direct mail can automatically be transmitted to the users.